

Andrew Jackson to James Jackson, August 25, 1819, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO JAMES JACKSON.

Hermitage, August 25, 1819.

D'r Sir: To enable you and Mr Whitesides to give a true statement of facts, if deemed necessary I make the following¹ about the year 1794 or 1795, having purchased in partnership with John Overton Esqr 25000 acres of land, this land was sold by Major Grant as agent to David Allison, on a credit for which his notes were Taken at Philadelphia. The part due me was laid out in merchandize. Allison was then in good credit. I had scarcely reached home when I was notified that Allison had failed and to prepare to cover my endorsement I sold my store then in Nashville to Colo. Elijah Robertson for thirty three thousand acres of land or thereabout—proceeded to Knoxville, and sold this land to Colo. James Stuart of Jonesborough at one quarter dollar pr. acre, and took a draft on Govr. Wm Blount then residing in Philadelphia for the amount—proceeded on to Philadelphia, where I found Blount Equally involved with Allison in distress and with great dificulty, got up the paper I had endorsed, and was compelled in closing this disasterous business, to take D. Allison's paper for the amount due me. Thus David Allison became indebted to me—the land I sold Stuart to enable me to take up his paper is now worth at least \$200000.

¹ This letter shows the extreme difficulty of carrying on business on the frontier, due to the lack of instruments of credit. As it was, men traded in notes signed by their neighbors. It was like a card-house, the failure of one important man carrying many others with him. The quickness with which Jackson's store in Nashville vanished into thin air would be amusing if it were not so tragic.

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D. Allison died in Philadelphia Jail as it was thought insolvent In his life time he had mortgaged the 85,000 acres of land on Duck river to Norton Prior to secure the payment of a debt—That in the latter end of the year 1799, or early in the year 1800, Joseph Anderson as agent for Norton Prior, came to an agreement with me to have the mortgage prosecuted to a foreclosure in the name of Norton Prior, against the heirs and Devisees of David Allison for which I was to have a part of his proportion of the land. This suit by the instructions of Jos. Anderson was to be instituted and prosecuted in the Federal court at Nashville. I not then being a practising lawyer, but engaged in public life as Judge of the Supreme Court, employed John Overton to originate and prosecute the same which he did agreeable to the instructions given by Jos. Anderson to a decree—and the Tittles under the decree, was made agreeable to the written instructions given me by Joseph Anderson. The part of the land Deeded to me by the marshall, I sold believing it to be a good tittle, being present when Thos. Blount signed the Deed for the same to David Allison, and I never once thought of a defect in the decree, for the want of Jurisdiction in the court. I was not present when the decree was entered up, and the cause having been prosecuted agreeably to the instructions of Judge Anderson in the Federal court.

I never once thought on the subject, Untill after I had sold the land, George W. Campbell came to me in Nashville I think in the year 1810 or 1811 and told me he had been examining the proceedings in that suit and the sale under the decree was a nulity the court not having Jurisdiction. Having sold and made a general warrentee, I became alarmed and knowing that Jenkin Whitesides was interested under the marshals sale I immediately went to Mr J Whitesides and informed him of Mr Campbells opinion. Mr Whitesides replied that he knew that, and that he had informed Mr. Irwin that the heirs of David Allison had it in their power at any time to redeem but Mr Irwin and himself was of opinion that the debt was so great that they heirs never would be able to redeem. I told Mr Whitesides I had never sold any land but what I thought the title was a good one, that I would not rest my title on such a foundation, that David Allison was indebted to me in the sum of about \$20,000, and that if the heirs could redeem, I would endeavour to secure my debt and

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those honest men to whom I had sold when I thought my title was good I prosecuted a suit by J. Dickeson on one hand to Judgt, against the heirs of David Allison. I proceeded to Georgia carrying with me the record, met William Allison who was present when I last settled with his brother David knew the Justice of my claim and how much I had suffered in sacrifice of property by him he convened the heirs who readily agreed to transfer me all their right to any property within the state of Tennessee that they were invested with by descent as heirs of David Allison and executed a Deed to me and I executed to them a release against the debt. This is a concise statement of the facts—you know the ballance.

I enclose you a copy of the record which I have procured accidentally since I saw you. it proves what Judge Overton states that he alone prosecuted the suit in the name of Norton Prior as council alone, and is full proof that Irwin in his answer has stated and swore to a falshood, when he states that this suit was prosecuted by Whitesides, and this ought to be stated in a clear manner, that the people might see, that a man who would swear to a falshood, proven as such by record would state any thing to benefit himself. in time I will hunt up all the papers on this subject, but being so long engaged in public business, my papers are so numerous and desorted that it is hard to find any particular one. I shall see you on Saturday. I am your[s] respectfully.